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Probable Consequences of Certain US Actions with Respect to Vietnam and Laos

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, and NSA.

Concurring:

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Abstaining:

The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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GROUP 1
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PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN US ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO VIETNAM AND LAOS

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the consequences of certain US and US-sponsored actions against North Vietnam (DRV) and Communist-held Laos, the objectives of which would be to induce the DRV to bring about a major reduction of Viet Cong insurrectionary activity in South Vietnam and to respect the 1962 Geneva agreement on Laos.

ASSUMPTIONS [1]

I. The actions to be taken, primarily air and naval, would begin with GVN (US-assisted) operations against the DRV and Communist-held Laos, and might subsequently involve overt US military actions. They would be on a graduated scale of intensity, ranging from reconnaissance, threats, cross-border operations, and limited strikes on logistical targets supporting DRV efforts in South Vietnam and Laos, to strikes (if necessary) on a growing number of military and economic targets in the DRV. In the absence of all-out attacks by the DRV or Communist China, the measures foreseen would not involve attacks on population centers or resort to nuclear weapons.

[1] These assumptions have been given to the intelligence community for the purpose of this estimate and are not meant to represent the full range of options open to the US. The intelligence community is not asked to assess the consequences either (1) of undertaking other broad courses, or (2) of not undertaking the general course discussed in this estimate.

II. That these actions would be accompanied by these US moves:

A. Through various channels, conveying the limited nature of US intentions to Hanoi, Peiping, and Moscow.

B. Stationing initially some 5,000 US combat troops and certain additional air elements in northeastern Thailand, with a possible increase at a later stage.

C. Giving the enemy tangible evidence of US seriousness of purpose by readying and deploying strong US strike units—naval, air, and ground assault—to the Western Pacific and the South China Sea.

D. Providing increased military support, including air defenses, to South Vietnam. Further, stiffening overall GVN military and administrative capabilities by the infusion of substantial additional US personnel.

E. Acting diplomatically to avert a new Geneva conference, at least until it was judged that the above actions had improved the bargaining position of the US and its associates.

CONCLUSIONS

A. In response to US preparatory and low-scale actions—force deployments, serious threats, or GVN/Farmgate attacks on outlying targets in Communist-held Laos or North Vietnam—Hanoi would probably agitate world opinion against the US, hoping that a new Geneva conference or UN action would result, and bring a cessation of attacks. We think that North Vietnam, while taking various precautionary measures, would order the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao to refrain from dramatic new attacks, and might reduce the level of the insurrections for the moment. Communist China and the USSR would both support these courses. The Communists' line would probably be that the outcome of a conference should be to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam and Laos. Their intention, however, would be to preserve Communist gains and assets in these two countries and to resume the insurrectionary campaigns at a later date.

B. If these initial responses did not succeed, and attacks on North Vietnam continued, it is likely that the Communists would intensify their political action efforts against the US course. Hanoi might intermittently step up the tempo of the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos, while still seeking a negotiated settlement. If these tactics, too, failed, the scale of attacks broadened, and North Vietnam began to suffer considerable destruction, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether the tactics they were pursuing were worth the destruction of their country. We are unable to set any meaningful odds for the course North Vietnam's leaders would adopt at this juncture, though we incline to the view that they would lower their terms for a negotiated outcome; they would do so in the interests of preserving their regime and in the expectation of being able to renew the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos at a later date. There would nevertheless be a significant danger that they would fight, believing that the US would still not be willing to undertake a major ground war, or that if it was, it could ultimately be defeated by the methods which were successful against the French.

C. Communist China almost certainly would not wish to become involved in hostilities with US forces. It would accordingly proceed with caution, though it would make various threatening gestures. There would probably not be high risk of Chinese Communist ground intervention unless major US/GVN ground units had moved well into the DRV or Communist-held areas of northern Laos, or possibly, the Chinese had committed their air and had subsequently suffered attack on CCAF bases in China. The USSR would make strenuous propaganda and political efforts in Hanoi's behalf, and would probably offer various weapons and air defense equipment. We believe, however, that the USSR would refrain from military actions in the area, and would not provoke a crisis with the US elsewhere which would bring a direct US–USSR confrontation. Its primary concern would be to exert its influence in a manner to insure a negotiated settlement, though without prejudicing its future relations with Hanoi.

D. Clear-cut achievement of the US objectives as stated in the Problem would signify not that the Communist threat in Southeast Asia was removed, but simply that time had been gained for further constructive action to deal with the threat. The US commitment would in itself improve anti-Communist morale and improve the chances for such action. On the other hand, to the degree that the consequences of the US action were ambiguous or unsuccessful, there would almost certainly be a strong tendency for morale and discipline in South Vietnam and Laos to deteriorate rapidly—perhaps more rapidly than if the US had not begun its intensified effort. Such deterioration would be felt generally through non-Communist Asia.

DISCUSSION

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

1. The ability of the US to compel the DRV to turn off the VC insurrection rests principally upon the effect of US sanctions on the *will* of DRV leadership to continue and to enlarge that insurrection. The measures envisaged would not seriously affect Communist *capabilities* to continue that insurrection. Despite the direction, personnel, and material support which the DRV gives the VC, the primary sources of Communist strength in South Vietnam are indigenous: peasant grievances and war-weariness; VC terror, arms capture, disciplined organization, and highly developed intelligence systems; and the fact that the VC enjoys some status as a nationalist movement. Provided DRV direction continued, from either Hanoi or the bush, such indigenous support would continue to constitute a substantial threat until and unless the GVN developed hamlet security and overcame the political misrule and uncertainty of the past two years.

2. The situation is different in the case of Laos; indeed, the PL would deteriorate rapidly if the substantial stiffening now provided by the DRV were withdrawn.

II. PRINCIPAL FACTORS INFLUENCING REACTIONS TO US AND US-SPONSORED ACTIONS

3. *Hanoi's Comprehension of GVN and US Intentions.* If the Communists are to respond in the desired way, they must understand that although the US is not seeking the destruction of the DRV regime, the US is fully prepared to bring ascending pressures to bear to persuade Hanoi to reduce the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos. We believe that the leaders in Hanoi would almost certainly comprehend US purposes in the early phase of the actions proposed. Hitherto they have evidently understood and played on the reluctance of the US to become deeply engaged on the Asia mainland, and they would count on domestic pressures in an election year to sustain this reluctance. The means for communicating US intentions seem likely to be effective, and the advice given by the USSR and Communist China would probably support a correct interpretation.

4. As the scale of GVN and US attacks mounted, however, especially if the US seemed adamant against entering negotiation, Hanoi would tend increasingly to doubt the limited character of US aims. Similarly, the retaliatory measures which Hanoi might take in Laos and South Vietnam might make it increasingly difficult for the US to regard its

objectives as attainable by limited means. Thus difficulties of comprehension might increase on both sides as the scale of action mounted.

5. *The DRV View of its Stake in South Vietnam and Laos.* The DRV has been patient and cautious in pursuing the war in Laos and South Vietnam. It has been careful to avoid the costs and risks of direct involvement, and, to date at least, has pulled back whenever it appeared that its tactics might provoke a major US response. It has been willing to use time to wear down the morale of the South Vietnamese and Laotian governments and populations, to convince them that victory for the DRV, the VC, and the PL is inevitable, and to persuade them that the US will prove an unreliable and ineffective ally. Further, the DRV runs the insurrections very much on the cheap, without any major drain on its economy or military establishment. Nevertheless, the DRV is intensely committed to the final aim of bringing South Vietnam, and at some stage Laos, under Hanoi's control, an outcome which would for Hanoi's leaders mark the completion of their revolution.

6. There is evidence that confidence has been growing in Hanoi that the final phase in the struggle in South Vietnam is approaching. Evidently there has been a belief that disintegration was under way in South Vietnam, and that the pace of VC activity could be intensified. Nevertheless, we believe that Hanoi is not presently committed to a rapid push for final victory, is prepared to accept further delay and even temporary setbacks, confident that Communist or pro-Communist regimes responsive to Hanoi will eventually be established in Saigon and Vientiane. Further, the degree of Hanoi's control over the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos is sufficient to insure that it could raise or lower the level of action there.

7. *DRV Capability to React Militarily in South Vietnam and Laos.* VC forces in South Vietnam include about 25,000 regulars (full-time troops in identifiable district, provincial, and regional units), plus 60–80,000 troops (most of whom are part-time) in local self-defense and guerrilla elements. Regular troops have been employed in combat, and we know of no units being "hoarded" for commitment at some decisive future time. Nevertheless, regular forces generally see action only one or two days a month. Further, many larger regular formations are normally broken up into smaller units (platoons and squads) which serve with local, part-time elements. Consequently, the VC would probably be able to mount a concentrated, fairly short-term attack considerably more intense than any it has to date. Against some single objective—of key psychological importance—they could probably coalesce and concentrate normally dispersed regular units to mount a much larger action than has yet been attempted. We are fairly confident that the VC could not gather more than a few battalions without

giving some prior indication. There are almost certainly VC terrorist cells in urban areas which have not yet been committed or discovered; thus the VC probably have the capability significantly to increase urban terrorism, particularly in Saigon, should they so decide.

8. Should the DRV wish to respond by augmenting VC capabilities with regular North Vietnamese forces, we believe that in about a month the DRV could infiltrate the equivalent of about one regular DRV brigade (on the order of 7,500 men) into South Vietnam. If, instead, the DRV undertook to react immediately with an overt invasion, they could probably attack across the DMZ with about two divisions in approximately two weeks time from making the decision to move, but they would have great logistical difficulty in sustaining such a force in combat in South Vietnam. Given more time, they could of course commit a considerably larger force.

9. Under present circumstances, PL/DRV forces now in Laos probably have the capability of overrunning most of the country. Should US or allied units be introduced, present Communist forces would probably have only a harassing capability. However, two North Vietnamese army brigades are believed to be positioned near the Laotian border (one at Dien Bien Phu, the other opposite Sam Neua) and elements of two additional brigades are deployed at various points near the frontier along the main routes leading into Laos. Consequently, Communist strength in Laos could be quickly augmented by at least two fully armed and equipped North Vietnamese regular brigades (about 15,000 men).

10. *DRV Capabilities for Defending Itself Against Attack.* The DRV could certainly concentrate sufficient troops to protect any major installation against ground attack by South Vietnamese forces, whether infiltrated overland, put in by sea, or air-dropped. Present DRV defense capabilities against aerial bombardment, however, are minimal. Its capabilities in anti-aircraft artillery have improved over the past several years to the point where the DRV could probably cope with helicopters and propeller aircraft, but North Vietnamese defenses would be relatively ineffective against high speed jets. It has a radar net of about 29 early warning and fire control installations situated throughout the country, but the equipment is obsolete. Mainland Chinese radar also covers North Vietnam, but so far as we know it is not now coordinated with the DRV net. North Vietnam is not known to have any surface-to-air missile capability. It has no combat aircraft at the present time, though the foundations for the creation of an air arm have been laid: headquarters, maintenance, and support organizations have been at least partially developed, and much work has been done on airfield improvement and construction. China could of course

provide fighter aircraft (probably MIG 17s) for a small "North Vietnamese" air force on short notice.

11. *DRV Ability and Willingness to Sustain Damage.* We have many indications that the Hanoi leadership is acutely and nervously aware of the extent to which North Vietnam's transportation system and industrial plant is vulnerable to attack. On the other hand, North Vietnam's economy is overwhelmingly agricultural and, to a large extent, decentralized in a myriad of more or less economically self-sufficient villages. Interdiction of imports and extensive destruction of transportation facilities and industrial plants would cripple DRV industry. These actions would also seriously restrict DRV military capabilities, and would degrade, though to a lesser extent, Hanoi's capabilities to support guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam and Laos. We do not believe that such actions would have a crucial effect on the daily lives of the overwhelming majority of the North Vietnamese population. We do not believe that attacks on industrial targets would so greatly exacerbate current economic difficulties as to create unmanageable control problems.

12. It is reasonable to infer that the DRV leaders have a psychological investment in the work of reconstruction they have accomplished over the last decade. Nevertheless, they would probably be willing to suffer some damage to the country in the course of a test of wills with the US over the course of events in South Vietnam.

13. *DRV Appraisal of the Value and Hazards of Chinese Communist Rescue.* An important concern of the DRV leaders would be to avoid having to be rescued at the price of Chinese dominance. DRV leaders seek to run their own show in Indochina, however often certain of them may voice support of Chinese debating positions against the Soviets. The considerable material support they have received from Communist states has not derogated DRV freedom of action. Moreover, they are chiefly dependent for economic and technical assistance upon the USSR and Eastern Europe. DRV leaders would probably consider that the introduction of Chinese and Soviet-supplied air defense means might have a deterrent effect on US intentions, and might provide some military offset to GVN measures against the North; we doubt, however, that Hanoi would have much confidence that such defense means could effectively protect the DRV from either overt US or Farmgate air attacks. Though DRV leaders would doubtless differ sharply on the question, Hanoi would almost certainly refrain from requesting such Chinese assistance as might endanger DRV independence, for example, large-scale ground force "volunteer" intervention. This hesitancy would of course be overcome if DRV leaders considered the existence of their regime to be at stake.

14. *DRV Judgment of the Weight to Attach to World Pressures (Communist and non-Communist) Against the US Actions.* In the early stages at least, Hanoi would probably rely heavily on a belief that considerable pressure would develop in the world against the US action and that this would compel the US to relax its pressures. DRV leaders probably would be confident that the VC and the PL could continue to undermine non-Communist authority in South Vietnam and Laos while the DRV and its Communist allies were spinning things out interminably at Geneva. Hanoi's leaders would also probably count on significant opposition to the US course developing within the US, especially in the event the US action were not quickly successful and a major world crisis had developed.

15. *The Interests and Capabilities of Communist China in the Area.* Peiping appears to be more-or-less content with the present scheme of things in Laos and South Vietnam. These situations have served as a convenient "national liberation" club with which to flail the Soviets, and Peiping doubtless considers that South Vietnam and Laos will ultimately be Communist, and even though DRV-dominated, fairly responsive to China. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that Peiping is taking advantage of the vacuum in northern Laos to increase its own, Chinese, presence there.

16. The Chinese leaders are, however, in no hurry, and almost certainly wish to avoid major hostilities with the US. Despite their brave talk, they have been niggardly with tangible support of the Vietnam war. Their military cautiousness of the past few years strongly suggests that they are painfully aware of the wide disparity which exists between modern US combat aircraft and their own obsolescent and deteriorating CCAF. They are concerned over GRC and even Indian intentions toward mainland China. These considerations, added to their vast domestic problems and their difficulties with Moscow, almost certainly impel the Chinese to caution.

17. *The Interests and Capabilities of the USSR in the Area.* The USSR has little effective control or influence over the immediate situations in Laos or South Vietnam, though its roles as Geneva co-Chairman and potential provider of support against US military actions make the Soviet position a highly important one. Current Soviet objectives in the area appear to be to preserve some semblance of unity with North Vietnam, to contain the growing influence of China in Hanoi, and to prevent escalation of local situations into a direct conflict involving US forces. For some time, the Soviets have been disengaging from their obligations in Laos and avoiding attitudes or positions which would antagonize North Vietnam. In order to forestall any more direct US intervention and obtain some means of influencing Hanoi, the Soviet

leaders evidently see a new conference as the best path. They probably appreciate, however, that should a major crisis develop in the area, they would be under great pressure not to be backed down by US firmness of purpose.

18. *The Interests of Other Principally Concerned Parties.* World opinions vary greatly concerning the South Vietnam and Laos situations. The GRC is always in favor of a more forceful US course. Certain states in the area friendly to the US—Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, and Australia—have rather ambiguous views: on the one hand, fear that the US will not prove staunch, and, on the other, fear that US staunchness might provoke extreme enemy reactions. The prevailing opinion among many observers in much of Western Europe seems to be that the Indochina and Laos situations are not susceptible of military solution, and that any American efforts to expand the war to the North would probably be ineffective and not worth the risk. The governments of America's various allies of course recognize that US success or failure in Indochina will in varying degree affect their countries accordingly. We doubt, however, that such considerations outweigh fears and uncertainties concerning US expansion of the war.

III. PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE US AND US-SPONSORED COURSES OF ACTION

A. Reactions of the DRV

19. In response to US preparatory and low-scale actions—force deployments, serious threats, or GVN/Farmgate attacks on outlying targets in Communist-held Laos or North Vietnam—Hanoi would probably agitate world opinion against the US, hoping that a new Geneva conference or UN action would result, and bring a cessation of attacks. We think that the DRV, while taking various precautionary measures, would order the VC and PL to refrain from dramatic new attacks, and might reduce the level of the insurrections for the moment. Communist China and the USSR would both support these courses. The Communists' line would probably be that the outcome of a conference should be to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam and Laos. Their intention, however, would be to preserve Communist gains and assets in these two countries and to resume the insurrectionary campaigns at a later date.

20. Although Hanoi leadership would doubtless be divided on the question, the DRV at this initial juncture would probably incline to the view that US reluctance to assume larger risks had been overcome only by the fact of deteriorating situations in Laos and South Vietnam. Hanoi would probably assume that US resort to GVN cover for its attacks

indicated an unwillingness to become deeply entangled itself, and that the basic US intent was perhaps limited to holding the South Vietnam and Laos situations together until after the US national elections. Accordingly, the DRV tactics of feigning compliance and of spinning out negotiations would be based on an expectation that VC and PL pressures in the area, and world pressures on the US, would oblige the US to call a halt.

21. Should this initial DRV course not succeed—especially if the level of punishment being suffered by North Vietnam were rising or the US were beginning overt attacks on North Vietnamese targets—Hanoi would probably make an all-out propaganda and diplomatic drive for negotiations. In such negotiations, Hanoi would probably still seek to avoid an outcome which would, for example through strict inspection procedures, effectively deny it the opportunity to continue support for the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos. Hanoi might intermittently turn up the scale and level of the insurrections in order to improve its bargaining position and intensify international concern. Though we doubt that the DRV would attempt any overt invasion of Laos or South Vietnam, Hanoi might try for some psychologically spectacular victories in Laos and in South Vietnam (e.g., the seizure and sack of a provincial capital such as Quang Ngai). By this stage, DRV leaders would certainly have appealed for Soviet and Chinese Communist air defense support (radars, anti-aircraft artillery, SAMs, and possibly even CCAF aircraft), but we doubt that Hanoi would request Chinese Communist ground troops.

22. If the scale of the attacks broadened, approached Hanoi, and destroyed more and more valuable targets, the DRV leaders would have to ask themselves whether the tactics they were pursuing were worth the destruction of their country. Their confidence in their ability to achieve an acceptable outcome at the negotiating table would decline, and they might conclude that the US was after all aiming at the destruction of their regime. At this point, they might believe that their only choices were ostensible capitulation to the US demand to halt all action in South Vietnam and Laos, or an all-out attack with their own forces in one or both of these areas. We are unable to set any meaningful odds for their choice between these alternatives. On balance, we incline to the view that they would still seek a negotiated outcome in the interest of preserving their regime and in the hope of a future opportunity to resume the struggles in South Vietnam and Laos. There would nevertheless be a significant danger that they would fight, believing that the US would still not be willing to undertake a major ground war, or that if it was, it could ultimately be defeated by the methods which were successful against the French.

B. Communist China's Role in the Crisis

23. Peiping would almost certainly threaten intervention as the action mounted and take a number of moves intended to deter further US attacks on the DRV. Nevertheless, we believe that the Chinese would in fact be cautious about becoming involved in hostilities with US forces. Peiping would probably respond to stepped-up punishment of the DRV by deploying sizable numbers of its forces to areas bordering Vietnam and Laos. It would probably offer Hanoi anti-aircraft units, and might make some combat aircraft available to the DRV. We do not believe that it would offer to commit the CCAF [2] at this stage, although this cannot be ruled out. There would be a possibility that unacknowledged Chinese Communist units might make deep incursions into Laos and, possibly, Thailand and Burma. The Chinese Communists might also resume HE shelling in the Taiwan Straits. We doubt, however, that they would undertake any significant military activity elsewhere in Asia. There would probably not be high risk of Chinese Communist ground intervention unless major US/GVN ground units had moved well into the DRV or Communist-held areas of northern Laos, or possibly, the Chinese had committed their air and had subsequently suffered attack on CCAF bases in China.

C. The Soviet Role in the Crisis

24. The Soviets would probably not take any extreme action in the Indochina area. They probably now expect some increase in US pressures against the DRV, and it is likely that they have already warned Hanoi that its present course could create a dangerous military confrontation. The USSR would make strenuous propaganda and political efforts in Hanoi's behalf, and would probably offer various weapons and air defense equipment. As the crisis deepened the Soviets would probably engage in some vague missile diplomacy and otherwise seek to bring strong pressure on the US to find some political settlement. They would meanwhile exert pressure on Hanoi to make concessions sufficient to insure the opening of negotiations. We do not believe that the Soviets, in the interests of supporting Hanoi, would provoke a crisis with the US elsewhere which would bring a direct US–USSR confrontation.

25. The Sino-Soviet dispute has not to date had any major effect on the situations in Laos or South Vietnam. Moscow probably would on the one hand be happy to see a neutralist barrier sustained in Laos and

[2] The CCAF probably could deploy about 420 jet fighters (MIG–15s, 17s, 19s) about 160 jet light bombers (IL–28), and about 40 piston light bombers to airfields in South China where they would be within operational range of Vietnam.

South Vietnam. On the other, because it could not afford to alienate the DRV and the PL, or to lay itself open to Chinese accusations of selling out the Communist revolutionary cause in the area, Moscow could not avoid giving at least political support to the Peiping-leaning DRV, PL, and VC. On balance, Moscow, like Peiping, would probably be guided primarily by regard for its own security interests; thus the fact of the Sino-Soviet dispute, *per se,* would probably not have great impact on developments in Southeast Asia. We believe that the interests of Moscow and Peiping conflict on so many vital scores that anything short of Sino-US hostilities or a threat to the existence of the DRV would do little to alter the Sino-Soviet relationship in any crucial fashion.

D. Probable Development in South Vietnam

26. The encadrement of a substantial number of American personnel into the military and civil sectors of the GVN would, in the DRV view, lend credence to US statements of its intent to increase its support to South Vietnam. Hanoi would, of course, not miss the opportunity to charge that the US was "taking over" South Vietnam. In addition there might be a stepped up campaign of anti-American terrorism in Saigon and in the field. These actions of the US, together with its new course against the North, would hearten the GVN and large segments of the military and civil population, as clear evidence of increased US commitment and involvement.

E. Reactions by US Allies and Others

27. Except in the case of a few of our most staunchly anti-Communist allies, initial world reactions to the US course would tend to be adverse in direct proportion to the intensity of US actions against the DRV: low-scale indications of disapproval in the case of lesser sanctions, rising, in many cases, to condemnation as the crisis fever rose. Even in the latter case, these reactions would generally not so much be pro-Communist as they would be critical of US "brinkmanship." Once US attacks on North Vietnam occurred, and especially if the US resisted a cease-fire and negotiations, a General Assembly majority for condemnation, on the pattern of Suez, would be probable. Subsequent world reactions would of course hinge fairly directly on success of the US sanctions: if they halted Communist expansion in Indochina and led to an easing of tensions, US firmness would be retrospectively admired, as in the Cuban missile showdown; if they ended in failure and retreat, US "maturity" and world leadership would again be questioned.

28. The role of France deserves special mention. We believe it altogether likely that de Gaulle would from the outset associate himself with Communist demands for a return to Geneva without preconditions.

In such a conference the French would seek to play an independent role in the interest of pushing de Gaulle's well-known but ill-defined proposals for neutralization of the area. This French line would no doubt encourage the Communists to keep their concessions to a minimum, and would limit the support the US and GVN might receive from others. If no outcome acceptable to the US could be obtained, and especially if the US became directly involved in a major military effort in South Vietnam, the strains already present in Franco-American relations and in the NATO alliance would be severely exacerbated.

F. General Consequences

29. Clear-cut achievement of the US objectives as stated in the Problem would signify not that the Communist threat in Southeast Asia was removed, but simply that time had been gained for further constructive action to deal with the threat. The US commitment would in itself improve anti-Communist morale and improve the chances for such action. On the other hand, to the degree that the consequences of the US action were ambiguous or unsuccessful, there would almost certainly be a strong tendency for morale and discipline in South Vietnam and Laos to deteriorate rapidly—perhaps more rapidly than if the US had not begun its intensified effort. Such deterioration would be felt generally through non-Communist Asia.